

Thailand

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THAI PRIME MINISTER 'READY' TO MEET KHMERS TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS

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(EXCERPTS) PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT PRAMOT RETURNED FROM A WEEK-LONG REGIONAL POLICY-MAKING TOUR YESTERDAY AND DECLARED HIMSELF READY TO FLY TO PHNOM PENH TO SET UP RELATIONS WITH KHMER ROUGE CAMBODIA.

ONLY HOURS BEFORE HE GAVE HIS AIRPORT PRESS CONFERENCE RADIO PHNOM PENH WELCOMED KHUKRIT'S EARLIER STATEMENTS THAT THAILAND WAS READY TO BE FRIENDS WITH CAMBODIA AND SAID THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WISHED TO HAVE CLOSE RELATIONS WITH THE THAI, VIETNAMESE AND LAO PEOPLES.

PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT YESTERDAY EMPHASISED THAT IT WAS NOT THE THAI GOVERNMENT'S CONCERN WHAT ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM NEIGHBOURING INDOCHINESE STATES ADOPTED "BECAUSE IT IS THEIR RIGHT AND IT IS OUR DUTY NOT TO INTERFERE IN THEIR INTERNAL AFFAIRS."

HE SAID HE WAS READY TO MEET THE NEW KHMER LEADERS IN EITHER BANGKOK OR PHNOM PENH AND ALSO OFFERED TO PROVIDE AID IN THE FORM OF FOOD AND CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS FOR RECONSTRUCTION PURPOSES IN THE WAR-RAVAGED COUNTRY.

KHUKRIT'S OFFER OF AID AND TALKS WAS THE LATEST MOVE IN A STEADILY WARMING CLIMATE OF POLITICAL RECONCILIATION.

TO DATE THERE HAVE BEEN NO DISCLOSED OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, ALTHOUGH SEVERAL MEETINGS HAVE TAKEN PLACE ALONG THE THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER BETWEEN LOCAL OFFICIALS.

THE LATEST SUCH MEETING OCCURED AT PEIPET LAST WEEK, WHEN A KHMER ROUGE REPRESENTATIVE TOLD HIS THAI COUNTERPARTS THAT CAMBODIA DESIRED DIPLOMATIC AND TRADE TIES WITH THAILAND.

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